

NEWSLETTER 18 - AUGUST 1997

PROGRAMME FOR 1997/98

The following programme has been arranged so far:-

- 3rd October Whales and Dolphins of the West Coast of Scotland
Speaker from the Hebridean Whale & Dolphin Trust, Mull
Kirkton Church Hall at 8.00pm
- 31st October Scottish Wildlife Trust Reserves and their Management
Graeme Morison, Regional Reserves Manager (North)
Kirkton Church Hall at 8.00pm
- 1st November Working Party Visit to Eilean na Creige Duibhe to
position new notice boards and clear alien shrubs and
trees. Leader Graeme Morison of Scottish Wildlife Trust.
Please contact Brian Neath on 555 341 if you wish to join the group.
- 21st November Picts and Scots
Elizabeth Sutherland
Auchtertyre Community Education Hall at 8.00pm
- 12th December Going Wild in the Highlands. A Wildlife Photographer in the Scottish Highlands
David Whitaker
Auchtertyre Community Education Hall at 8.00pm
- 23rd January The Arctic and Antarctica - Contrasting Icecaps
Roger Tufft
Kirkton Church Hall at 8.00pm
- 27th February Highland Orchids
Murdo MacDonald
Auchtertyre Community Education Hall at 8.00pm

BOAT TRIP TO PABAY AND CROWLIN ISLANDS ON 14TH JUNE

The boat trip from Kyleakin to Pabay and the Crowlins aboard Mick Coe's MV Argus was much enjoyed by 33 members and friends. Two hours ashore on the tiny island of Pabay had seemed generous in advance but in the event most of us would have been happy to spend the rest of the day there. The grim weather of the previous two days had given way to a bright sunny day and the island was full of singing Skylarks and calling Curlews. Andrew Currie had joined us for the day and was busy identifying and recording the flora. Angus McHattie manages the island for the owner and had come over to help with the moorings and to tell us a little about the island. Otherwise there was no one else on the island other than our party and it was all too good to rush. However our schedule included sailing close to Longay and then across to the Crowlins and we had to press on. Although not particularly strong the NW wind was causing quite a swell in the Inner Sound and as a result we were unable either to get near Longay or to land on the Crowlins as planned. However we made up for this by cruising round Eileanan Dubha and into Loch na Beiste. The choppy water made it difficult for spotting seabirds or cetaceans but two unexpected Puffins were seen and we had superb close-up views of Common Seals at three different sites.

Although this was a cruise specifically requested by members at the AGM the turnout was very disappointing and the club's funds have been severely depleted by having to subsidise the trip.

SPRING 1997 - WILDLIFE REPORTS

The spring movement of Redwings was more obvious than usual and several people reported flocks in their gardens in early April. The birds were using some gardens as roost sites and were very noisy, chattering away like Starlings.

It was an exceptionally good year for woodland birds on Carr Brae despite all the activity associated with the rockfall. Wrens and Willow Warblers in particular were abundant and Cuckoo, Tree Pipit, Redstart, Song Thrush, Wood Warbler, Spotted Flycatcher, Long-tailed Tit, Treecreeper, Siskin, Redpoll and Bullfinch all had a good year. Less common species which also occurred on Carr Brae were Lesser Whitethroat, Garden Warbler, Blackcap and Chiffchaff. The only disappointment was the absence again of Great Spotted Woodpecker which was a regular breeding bird until three years ago.

Bullfinches were more numerous than usual and became quite tame, even feeding at bird-tables in some gardens. Roger Cottis also noticed unusual numbers of Bullfinches in Sleat.

Amongst the more unusual bird sightings were a Black Redstart at Auchtertyre and an Osprey which Luke Camilli watched catching a fish at a remote upland loch. There were two drake Wigeon amongst the Mallard in Kirkton Bay on 20th June; an unexpected occurrence as this duck is generally a winter visitor to the area.

A Chiffchaff was present once again in the trees opposite Inverinate Service Station. What is it that brings this bird back year after year to this particular site?

The butterfly season began where the last one left off with Red Admirals on the wing from 15th April. It is said to be unusual for hibernating Red Admirals to survive the northern winter but clearly some did just that this year. It is certainly the first year that I have recorded this species in April. Small Tortoiseshell was the only other conspicuous butterfly until mid-May when Green-veined White and Green Hairstreak emerged. I counted 65 Green-veined White along the Coille Mhor/Balmacara Forest track on 30th May but saw no other species there. There were about 22 Green Hairstreak on Carr Brae on 15th May and I found some near Loch Scalpaidh for the first time on 26th May.

It has been an interesting year for day-flying moths. I was lucky to see two Narrow-bordered Bee Hawk-moths at Strathie on 4th June and another probable on Kyle golf course the next day. Speckled Yellows were widespread in early June as were Six-spot Burnets later in the month. I identified the attractive Argent and Sable for the first time near Bundalloch on 2nd June and then near Badicaul on 16th.

Newsletter compiled by Brian Neath (01599 555341)

